National furniture chain opens

WEATHERFORD — Heilig-Meyers Company, the nation's largest home-furnishings retailer, is set to celebrate the grand opening of its new Weatherford store.

The facility joins a major chain consisting of over 800 stores across the country including 22 Heilig-Meyers locations in Texas.

Store Manager Bert Bell, a three-year employee of Heilig-Meyers, is optimistic about the retailer's success in Weatherford.

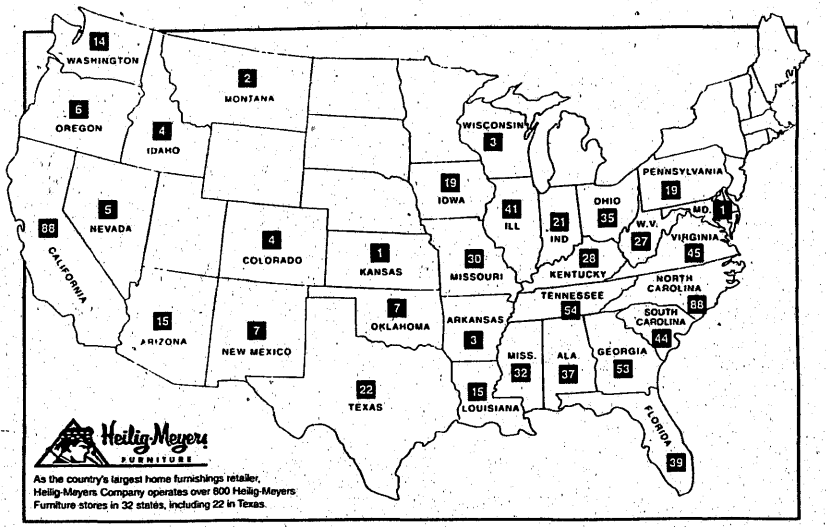
"Weatherford has the perfect mix of customers for Heilig-Meyers," Bell said. "It seems like people in this area really do want to shop locally and with the brand names and diverse category offering they'll find at Heilig-Meyers, they can do that."

In addition to furniture, the store's merchandise mix will include bedding, carpeting, decorative home accessories, electronics, appliances, jewelry, seasonal goods and nursery/juvenile items.

Bell, a Mississippi native who last served as manager of the chain's Jackson store, said he "couldn't be more pleased to be managing a brand new location in a wide-open, beautiful area of the country."

The grand opening is slated for Friday and Saturday, May 9 and 10. Area residents and local officials have been invited to join Bell, the Heilig-Meyers staff and executives from the chain's Richmond, Va., headquarters for ribbon-cutting ceremonies at the new store at 1819 S. Main St., former home of Wal-Mart.

The Weatherford Heilig-Meyers, a 25,000 square foot facility, will employ 15 people, including Credit Manager Keith Blair and Warehouse Manager Darrell Hanks. The store manager said the majority of the associates were hired from the local job pool.



Founded in 1913 by two Lithuanian immigrants, Heilig-Meyers has come a long way since its single-store beginning in Goldsboro, N.C.

The company more than doubled its total number of stores in the first half of the nineties with a strong commitment to corporate expansion and a number of takeovers, including the 1994 acquisition of 92 stores from a California based chain.

Recent major acquisitions include 23 locations from Self Service Furniture, headquartered in Spokane, Wash., and 25 locations from McMahan's Furniture Company of Santa Monica, Calif.

Heilig-Meyers Company also recently purchased Atlanta-based Rhodes, Inc. with 105 stores, and The RoomStore, a 10-store chain headquartered in Dallas. Rhodes and The RoomStore will keep their names and operate as divisions of Heilig-Meyers.

Despite the retail giant's size, this company's Heilig-Meyers Furniture stores primarily serve residents of smaller cities like Weatherford with populations of less than 50,000.

Bill DeRusha, chief executive officer for Heilig-Meyers Company, credits the chain's size with much of its success.

"Because we're such a large chain, we can reap the benefits of volume purchasing power, keep our everyday prices low for customers and offer flexible, in-house financing options."